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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Holy God, known to us in countless ways, we seek to magnify Your glorious Name.

Lord, You are worthy of our praise, for You have been our help in ages past. You are our hope for all of our tomorrows.

Remind us all that we are temporary creatures who long for a sense of permanence. Inspire our Senators with the knowledge that You are changeless and that they can trust that Your mercies will endure.

May our lawmakers continue to depend on You for the vindication of every just cause and for the forgiveness of every sin.

We pray in Your merciful Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. LEAHY).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, June 15, 2021.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATRICK J. LEAHY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

VOTING RIGHTS

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, a few weeks ago, toward the end of the legislative session in Texas, Texas Democrats in the statehouse staged a dramatic walkout, denying a quorum and preventing the Texas Republican majority from passing one of the most restrictive voting laws in this country.

Texas Republicans could come back and reconsider the law in a special session, but the extraordinary measures taken by the State Democrats reflect the extraordinary damage of the voting law.

Texas Republicans were on the verge of passing several alarming restrictions: reducing polling hours, eliminating drive-through voting and 24-hour voting centers. The proposed law would have made it easier for a judge to overturn an election and push back the start of Sunday voting—a measure that seemed designed to interfere with voting drives held by Black churches.

Texas already has some of the strictest voting procedures in the country. The additional effort, in the wake of Donald Trump's Big Lie, directly tar-

gets all the ways poorer, younger, non-White, and typically Democratic voters cast their ballots.

Of course, Texas is only the most recent flashpoint in the nationwide effort by Republican legislators to contract Americans' right to vote, as you well know, Mr. President.

The tide of Republican voter suppression laws is a direct assault on our democracy and could disenfranchise tens of millions of Americans.

Today, I am proud to say, at the Democratic caucus lunch we will host the group of Texas Democrats who bravely fought the voter suppression law in their State. The topic of our discussion will be about how to come together to protect voting rights not just in Texas but across the country.

Next week, the Senate will consider major voting rights legislation. Congress must take action to defend our democracy.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, on the President's foreign trip, President Biden's first foreign trip has projected a welcome sight to the world: an American President embracing our allies and bringing them together to confront our common adversaries.

Already, the President's visit to G7 has yielded results: a commitment to counter China's rapacious economic policies and unwinding a longstanding dispute over tariffs and trade with the European Union.

Now after meeting with our allies at both the G7 and at the NATO summit in Brussels, the President will meet tomorrow with Vladimir Putin. From the occupation in Crimea to violating political human rights within its own borders, to interfering in democratic elections across the Western world, to imprisoning those who expose his brutal, undemocratic regime, Vladimir Putin has spent the past decade interfering and destabilizing the world order.

● This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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For 4 years, former President Trump turned a blind eye and gave Putin a free pass. In the history of our country, Americans had never seen a President of the United States support an adversary the way Trump supported President Putin on that stage in Helsinki nearly 3 years ago. We all remember President Trump standing next to Vladimir Putin and taking the word of a Russian intelligence officer over America's intelligence agencies.

Trump not only defended Putin repeatedly from accusations of election interference, he actually announced—if you believe this, stranger than fiction—that the United States and Russia would set up a joint cyber security unit. Even Senator GRAHAM said that it wasn't "the dumbest idea [he'd] ever heard, but it [was] . . . close."

Now, President Biden must take the exact opposite approach. The United States must approach Vladimir Putin with a firm hand and demand accountability in a way that President Trump never did. I expect President Biden will do exactly that.

One issue I am particularly concerned about is cyber security and the rise of ransomware attacks on the critical infrastructure of the United States. Many of those cyber criminals, unsurprisingly, may be hiding out in Putin's Russia or potentially connected to Putin's intelligence agencies.

Here at home, I have called on Congress to significantly boost funding for our cyber fighting Agencies and asked our Senate committees to study if we need new legislation to help counter the threat of cyber attacks.

Abroad, President Biden has an opportunity to pressure Putin directly to put an end to Russian-supported cyber crime. I expect he will. The President has smartly made these issues a priority among our NATO allies, announcing a host of joint actions to combat cyber crime, harden our cyber security, and condemn Russian aggression in the cyber space. It is time to take the issue directly to Vladimir Putin himself.

For 4 years, former President Trump berated our allies while emboldening and sometimes embracing the world's dictators and autocrats, Vladimir Putin above all. Already, President Biden's first foreign trip is a welcome turn of the page in America's relationship with the world.

DOMESTIC TERRORISM

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, finally, on one final matter, QAnon, last December, I joined with Senator HEINRICH and other Democrats to ask the FBI and DHS to provide a written assessment on the dangers posed by the online conspiracy group QAnon.

They recently responded to our request with a very sobering assessment. The threat of QAnon is likely to persist, and the current environment will likely continue to spur QAnon adherents to see violence as a legitimate course of action. The assessment also

expresses that QAnon adherents and domestic violent extremists will likely shift from acting digitally to engaging in real world violence. That is a shot across our bow. That is a warning signal.

QAnon today is perhaps best known for the role it played in inspiring many of the rioters who assaulted the U.S. Capitol on January 6. According to the FBI's assessment, they arrested 20 self-identified adherents who participated in the insurrection. But even before the horrific events on January 6, QAnon supporters spread disinformation that amplified hatred and violence and threatened our democratic institutions.

The past 4 years have seen a notable increase in violent domestic terrorism, fed by a host of lies and conspiracies that flourished under the Trump era. This assessment by the FBI is a stark reminder that we have a lot of work to do to tamp down conspiracy theories and disinformation as well as monitoring and thwarting violent domestic extremists.

And to my Republican Senate colleagues, I would add that this report further strengthens the argument for an independent January 6 Commission.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, 1 week ago today, the personal financial information of several prominent Americans was made public in only the latest leak of sensitive data from the Internal Revenue Service. To put it another way, it appears that an anonymous source committed a felony by releasing the confidential information of American citizens, which a media outlet then published. Now, the way this leak has been covered in the press may not suggest it, but the most alarming part isn't whose information was involved; it is how it was allowed to happen at all—at all.

The American people know that having the personal information they give to the IRS made public isn't just a fear reserved for the highest earners. On multiple occasions in the last decade, individuals and organizations alike have had to watch as their filing details wander far from the IRS's databases. And it goes beyond pay stubs. The IRS holds massive storage of sensitive details, from healthcare expenses, to retirement savings, to charitable contributions. They hold addresses, information about dependents, and associations with organizations that may not be tax-deductible.

Needless to say, there are good arguments for paring back the scope of what information this Agency is al-

lowed to collect in the first place. But here is the bottom line: American taxpayers are required by law to comply with invasive disclosure requirements, and they are doing it with less and less confidence that the Federal Government will honor their trust.

A fundamental piece of our Nation's social contract is fraying, but just how worried you should be about it apparently depends on your personal politics. The precise circumstances of this latest leak have not yet been made clear, but the recent history of IRS negligence and outright political targeting tells conservatives to be especially worried.

As our colleagues remember all too well, years ago, the State of California's database of private donor data for over 1,000 nonprofit organizations was made public illegally. A few years later, confidential IRS donor information from a conservative organization's tax filings was published. To no one's surprise, that information made its way into the hands of liberal groups with opposite views on key issues. Of course, we are talking about the same IRS that made slow-walking requests and filings from conservative organizations a matter of internal policy under the last Democratic administration.

So these situations all have two things in common: first, a blatant political agenda aimed at advancing the cause of the political left, and second, the utter absence of criminal charges against the leakers—no charges against the leakers.

So let's be clear. As soon as sensitive personal information is leaked, the damage is already done. The genie can't be put back in the bottle, and the Federal Government has proven far too often that it is at best, incapable and at worse, unwilling to protect taxpayers' data from misuse by the political left. That is why I have been outspoken in support of efforts to reduce taxpayers' exposure to unnecessary IRS collection in the first place.

But every time a leak goes without serious investigation and criminal prosecution, basic public trust in our tax system suffers, and that fraying trust may eventually be irreparable. That is why I joined Ranking Member GRASSLEY and Ranking Member CRAPO to demand that the Department of Justice and the FBI immediately investigate last week's leak and aggressively pursue criminal charges against those who are responsible—actual consequences as a matter of justice and as a practical deterrent. The Federal Government owes taxpayers nothing less.

Unfortunately, thus far, the Biden administration hasn't just neglected to aggressively prosecute overt discrimination; in some cases, it is actually trying to promote it.

Take the massive spending package Democrats rammed through in the name of COVID relief. The spending bill was billed as urgent, but its authors apparently had time to bake in a provision directing relief funds to restaurants on the basis of race and sex